



## SCHEDULED TRIBES OF MAHARASHTRA - PROPOSITION FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AMELIORATION

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**Abstract:** Who are indigenous people? Can tribes be called indigenous? Very often they experience non-recognition of their cultural identity. They are excluded from the mainstream society and are marginalized and they are called indigenous. They face discriminatory approaches and stigma. Culture of tribes gives rich ethnographic details about their cultural practices, perception and behavioural aspects. In India tribes often experience displacement and relocation from their traditional territories, and dispossession of their lands and resources by both government-led and private-led projects. They are engaged in extractive industries, logging, large-scale plantations mega-projects and dams. The traditional knowledge and the effective use and preservation of their lands, forests and natural resources can inspire measures for conservation. Traditional medicines and practices can be shared for the benefit of the wider society. The transition from the tribal to the peasant society is complicated and diversified. Tribal development because of the diverse situations has to be area-specific. Other problem of tribal development emanates from equating tribal areas with any other economically backward area and recommending identical packages of measures for their upliftment.

Tribes specifically Scheduled tribes of Maharashtra are also experiencing more or less same situation. The sense of marginalization and alienation has resulted in fragmentation of tribal economy and society. Most tribal displaced by development projects or industries have not been satisfactorily rehabilitated.

The basic system of laws governing Tribal Rights is still extremely unclear. It is therefore imperative to create a task force that should undertake a "Harmonisation of Laws" for scheduled tribes. A national plan of action for comprehensive development is warranted which would serve as a road map for the welfare of the tribal. There should be convergence of regulatory and development programmes in the tribal areas. The authorities involved in determining the inclusion and exclusion of tribes in the list of Scheduled Tribes should adopt a mechanism of consultation with the major States and those with tribal populations on the basis of which a comprehensive methodology with clearly defined parameters is arrived at. This paper is highlighting the proposition of socio-economic and developmental issues of scheduled tribes of Maharashtra.

**Key Words:** *Scheduled Tribes, Maharashtra, Marginalisation, Comprehensive Development*

**1. Introduction:** Most indigenous people have developed highly specialized livelihood strategies, which are adapted to the specific conditions of their traditional territories and are highly dependent on access to lands, territories and resources. Globalisation has increased the pressure on the contested lands and resources of the indigenous inhabitants. In many instances, these traditional livelihoods are no longer viable in contemporary environment. Although most indigenous people maintain strong links to their traditional lands and territories and maintain some elements of their traditional occupations, they still seek for alternative sources of income. At present majority of the indigenous groups live outside their traditional territories where they have to compete for jobs and economic opportunities. Outcome is that the scenario is not static. Impacts of historical processes have had a profound impact on them. Occupations and employment situation have forced them to take up dynamic and diversified activities in order to adapt to shifting circumstances beyond their control. This diversified status would need to be considered when exploring how **Convention No. 111** which addresses the situation in the declaration which affirms that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity, and further that discrimination constitutes a violation of rights enunciated by the universal declaration of Human Rights". (Source: <http://www.ilo.org/>)

The tribal population is identified as the aboriginal inhabitants in India. They are the most vulnerable section of our society living in natural and unpolluted surroundings far away from civilization with their traditional values, customs and beliefs. There has been a long and enduring debate among the social scientists to define a tribe. Constitution of India defines "Any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community as deemed under article 342 are Scheduled Tribes". Thus, the groups which are in the Scheduled list of the President of India are defined as Scheduled Tribes. Thus in Indian context, tribes are commonly designated as *Adivasi* (original settlers), *Girijan* (hill dwellers), *Vanya jati* (forest caste men), *Adimjati* (Primitive castes), and *Anusuchit Janjati* (Scheduled tribes). Tribal communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development.

**2. Maharashtra:** There are 1, 05, 10,213 reported as Scheduled Tribe, of which 53, 15,025 are males and 51, 95,188 are females showing an addition of 19, 32,937 during 2001-11. ". The growth rate for ST population in Maharashtra during 2001-11 stands to be 22.5 percent and their proportion in total population is 9.4 percent against 8.9 percent in 2001. According to Census 2011 Nandurbar has the highest proportion of Scheduled Tribe population with 69.3 percent followed by Gadchiroli 38.7 percent, Dhule 31.6 percent and Nashik 25.6 percent. The growth rate of the scheduled tribe's male population is 22.2 percent as against the 22.8 percent of female population. (Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, 2013)

In Maharashtra, concentration of tribes is confined in three traditional regions, i.e. 1) Sahyadri Region, 2) Satpuda region, and 3) Gondwana region. The Sahyadri region consists of Thane, Raigad, Nashik and Pune districts, where Varlis, Kokanas, Thakurs, Mahadeo Kolis, Malhar Kolis, Dhor Kolis, Katkaris, etc. tribal groups are found. The Satpudas region includes Nandurbar, Dhule, Jalgaon, Aurangabad and Amravati districts and particularly, Bhils, Kokanas, Dublas, Dhankas; Korkus are the main tribal groups here. The Gondwana region includes districts like Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Yavatmal and Nagpur and Gonds, Madia Gonds, Korkus, Kolams, Paradhans, Andhs, etc. are the main tribal groups found in this region.

### 3. Objectives of the Study:

- To find out socio-economic and cultural status of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra
- To assess the issues of development of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra.

**4. Methodology:** Secondary data was collected from Primary Census abstract along with Special tables on Scheduled Tribes. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire survey and field visits from six districts with predominant tribal population namely Gadchiroli, Amravati, Dhule, Nandurbar, Nashik and Thane. Selective random sampling technique was adopted for collection of data. The collected data was further analysed and used to support the research work.

### 5. Growth Rate of Scheduled Tribe Population in Maharashtra: 1971 – 2011

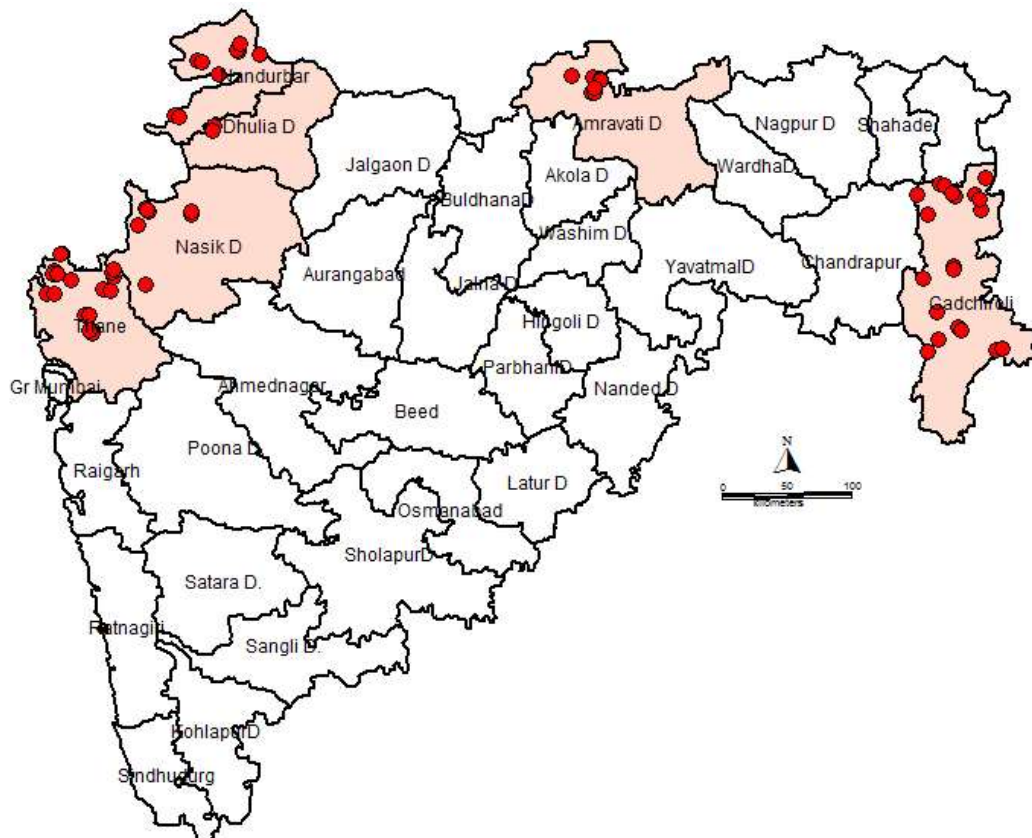
The term 'growth of population' is used in its broadest connotation to cover change in number of population inhabiting a territory during a specific period of time, irrespective of the fact whether the change is positive or negative. This change/ growth can be measured both in terms of absolute numbers and percentages (Chandana and Sidhu, 1980). Table 1.1 shows the decadal growth of tribal population in Maharashtra from 1971 to 2011. The trend in growth rate does not reflect any pattern between 1971 and 1981 (9.19%) and 1981 to 1991 (9.27%) census incorporated tribal societies with similar culture in order to receive government grant (Jain, 1998). The percentage of tribal population increased in 1991 and then gradually there was a downward trend from 2001. But in the 2001 (8.85%) growth decreased by 0.42 per cent. During 1991 to 2001, the caste validity process was applied in the state and tribal communities were shifted to Special Backward Caste i.e. SBC. Therefore the percentage of tribals decreased. Growth rate of this population has increased by 0.5% during 2001-2011 due to natural process.

**Table No. 1.1 Growth of Scheduled Tribe Population in Maharashtra, 1971 - 2011**

Serial No.	Year	Population (In lakhs)		Growth of Tribe's (%)
		Total	Tribal	
1	1971	504.12	29.54	5.86
2	1981	627.84	57.72	9.19
3	1991	789.37	73.18	9.27
4	2001	968.87	85.77	8.85
5	2011	1123.74	105.10	9.35

(Source: Census of India 1971 - 2011)

## Maharashtra: Study Area



## 6. Developmental Status of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra:

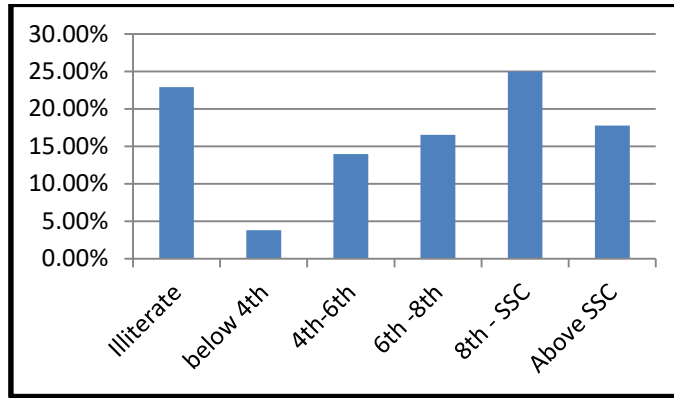
Ownership and control of land, particularly cultivated land is one of the basic characteristics of the growing inequities within tribal societies. The consolidation of land holdings under the control of relatively large farmers is inspired by a governmental push towards contract farming and export which led to agriculture through corporate support. In all cases however, it is clear that the status of the scheduled tribe is getting consolidated as a rural and urban worker and not as a farmer. In this situation the slow implementation of the Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Act, 2008 and Forest Rights Act, 2006 will only further hurt the interests of the scheduled tribes in contemporary India. Ecological degradation has severely curtailed the related traditional occupations. Tribal economy and the livelihood strategies have undergone substantial changes. Since the tribes were traditionally dependent on natural resources, the change was all the more visible due to the depletion of resources. In post-independence period, the rapid phase of urbanization and industrialization alienated the tribes from their traditional natural resource base and forced them to search for newer livelihood options.

Scheduled Tribe population in Maharashtra shows a varied degree of social and cultural differences. Their lifestyles and behavioural pattern changes as one move from western Maharashtra to eastern Maharashtra. They are unevenly distributed in different districts of Maharashtra. There are 47 Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra notified by the central government of India. Literacy level among tribal population is still low. Economically they are poor because they are jobless and perform marginal level jobs either in secondary or tertiary sectors. Involuntary displacement is common amongst them.

### 6.1 Issues of land ownership:

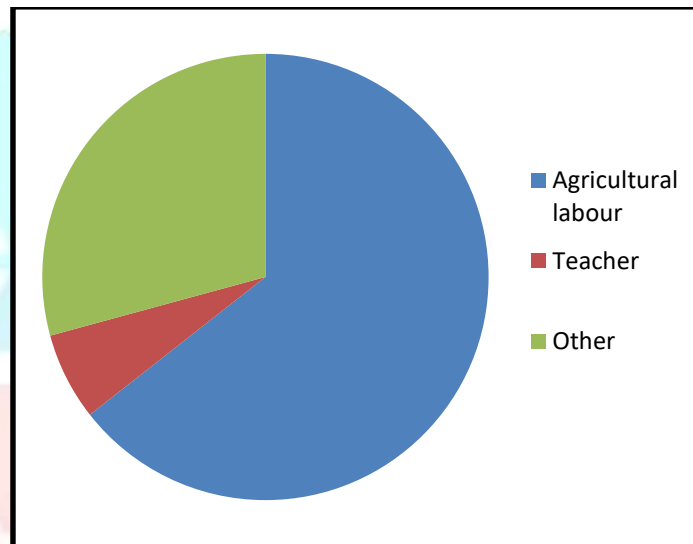
Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra are facing various land issues. Ever since the idea of property card of land has been implemented by British government in pre independence era they are struggling to get their land record on their name. The advantage of their illiteracy is taken by landlords, zamindars and recently by builder lobby and tribal land is taken away. In some instances state government under the name of developmental projects has also taken away the tribal land in Maharashtra. At present most of the Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra have Jirayat land or dry land that gives agricultural produce only in monsoon season. Water scarcity after monsoon is another problem for the tribes. They could not practice farming after the monsoon and are forced to go out of their territory in search of jobs. This results in migration and marginalization of the tribal communities. (Mukherji D and Zarekar, U) This Jirayat land is infertile in nature. Tribes cannot afford the organic manure or compost to increase the fertility of the land due to this situation their productivity gets affected and they get very less yield per acre.

Following are the ground realities about the scheduled Tribes found during the field work undertaken in tribal pockets of Maharashtra.



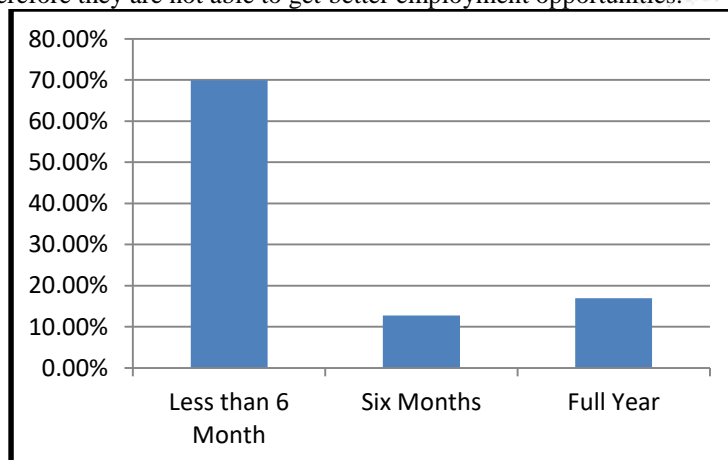
**Educational level of Scheduled Tribes**

Nearly 23 percent tribal people are illiterate, ¼ are have an standard education level between 8 to 10 standards, 18 percent are between 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> level and equal number of people are above SSC level and 16 percent are belonging in the category of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard. In other words the educational attainment of tribes in Maharashtra is a real hurdle for own development. This is directly related to employability of tribal community. Less educated tribals get low paid unskilled jobs in all the sectors of employment. A government effort to raise the education level of tribals through various schemes like Ashram schools has serious drawbacks on its implementations. No one is bothered about the accountability of fund spends and education given in these Ashram schools.



**Occupational Composition of Scheduled Tribes**

Occupations of Scheduled Tribes are mostly confined to labour. Of the total, 64 percent tribals are working as agricultural labourers. Around 6 percent account for teacher’s job, because of reservation policy adopted by government of Maharashtra. Another 6 percent belonging to other category are also working as labourers either in shops, hotels or as tourist guides. They are in service sector. Education level among tribes is still low. Therefore they are not able to get better employment opportunities.



**Job Duration of Tribes**

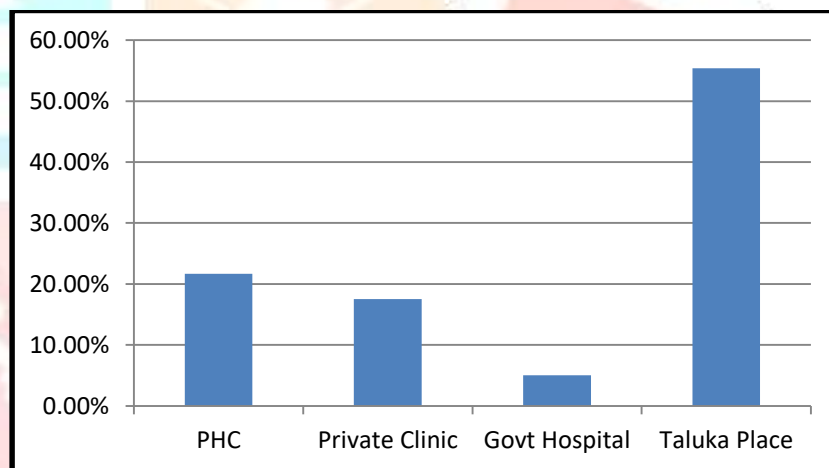
About 86 percent tribal villages do not have any industrial sector around their villages and those who have it; only 0.4 percent tribe gets low paid unskilled jobs. 0.4 Percent of tribes out of surveyed are affected by the governments land acquisition policy especially in the ranges of Satpuda Mountains. The tribal land acquisition has taken place for the construction of Narmada Sagar dam. Around 8 percent tribes like Bhils and Pavra feels a sense of insecurity due to the above policy of the government of Maharashtra. This is basically because they have to search new job for their livelihood.

## 6.2 Healthcare Accessibility

Only 39 percent tribes get access to basic health facility in nearby village areas and remaining 61 percent have go away from their villages to nearby towns or taluka places. Most of the time governments Primary Health Centres (PHC) are closed or resident doctors and related staff is not available, some time medicines are not available. The implication of this situation is found on the health of tribes of Maharashtra, especially the areas of Melghat in Amravati and almost all the talukas of Gadchiroli district. The distance to which they have travelled to get these facilities is also quite far from such health care centers.



Dilapidated Status of Primary Health care centre at Halewara village of Etapalli taluka of Gadchiroli district.



Status of Health Care Facilities in Tribal Areas

Only 22 percent of tribes have the access to Primary health care centres in their village areas, 18 percent have to go to the private clinics, 5 percent gets the benefit of availability of government hospitals in the vicinity and remaining 55 percent of them approach to the nearby taluka places to avail the health facility during emergencies. Role of NGO's is very negligible as far as tribal development is concerned; only 6 percent of tribes get the benefit of various developmental schemes operated by this NGO's. In fact these NGO's can play a very crucial role in tribal upliftment by making them aware of different governmental schemes. SEARCH in Dhanora and LOKBIRADARI in Bhamragad talukas are some of the examples of NGOs are doing real health care works for tribes in Gadchiroli district.

## 7. Suggestions:

1. Provision of small irrigation projects in tribal pockets will solve the problem of water to agriculture sector and they will be able to take second or third crop in a year. It would also help them to fulfil their basic need of food and issue of malnourishment would be also reduced.
2. For tribes, land is an issue of survival, preserving culture and identity. State has tried to solve the land related issues by way of land legislations; however they did not succeed in solving larger issues. Land reforms were defeated by multiple means such as concealing the actual tenancy, registering lands on benami names, forcible evictions, etc. All such issues need to be solved by the government and authorities.
3. Government should provide agricultural land to landless tribals and also to marginal workers for their sustenance.
4. A special set of vocational skills need to be incorporated in the Ashram school curriculum.
5. School on wheel scheme for the children of migrant families needs to be implemented.
6. Uninterrupted state transport facility has to be provided to tribal students across all seasons for travelling to schools.
7. Midday meal scheme has to be implemented for all tribal students and daily attendance allowance needs to be given regularly.
8. Clinic on wheel or mobile hospital scheme should be implemented for remote and highly inaccessible areas.
9. Implementation of MNAREGA scheme in right spirit along with direct benefit transfer.

10. Government should control the administrative negligence while implementing the developmental schemes in tribal pockets.

### 8. Final Note:

Scheduled tribes are the victims of so called development in the state of Maharashtra. Scheduled tribe society is dynamic in nature. They are close to the environment and natural resources. In the era of globalisation, liberalization and privatization tribal societies are struggling to sustain. They are not the skilled labourers but they are absorbed in the industries specifically small scale as daily wage labours. There is no fixed wage for them. Sometimes they are given vocational training but the wage they get is not sufficient for their sustenance. Very often tribes get displaced due to developmental projects. These situation further results in fracturing tribal society.

Displacement of tribals due to developmental projects is a common feature in India as well as in Maharashtra. Compared to other societies, Scheduled Tribe society pays the highest price of developmental projects. In Maharashtra Narmada Sarovar dam and Koyna dam has displaced tribal people in Nandurbar and Satara districts respectively. Projects which have displaced the tribal communities are not able to transfer their resources to which the tribals belong to; as a result it is a disproportionate land acquisition. In this land infrastructural projects are developed. Tribals are not able to get absorbed in this new developmental projects and their status does not change. As a result they are suffering because of lack of politico-administrative institution.

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